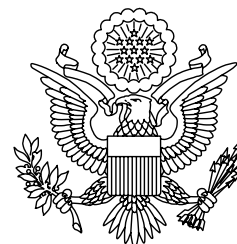


AFRICA NEWS REPORT



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Africa News Report (ANR) is a weekly compilation of U.S. Government official texts, policy statements and interpretive material, features, and byline articles concerning U.S.-African policies and programs. The articles it includes are selected from a publication called the "Washington File," which is prepared daily by the U.S. Department of State. Available in both French and English versions, the ANR is published by Africa Regional Services of the U.S. Embassy in Paris and sent to African diplomats, journalists, researchers, academics, students and consultants. Material in the ANR may be reproduced and distributed.

ENGLISH VERSION

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Situation in Darfur

November 20, 2006

United States Urges Sudan to Agree to Peacekeeping Plan

Framework calls for expanded joint United Nations-African Union force

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States wants the current conflict in Darfur to be the Sudanese region's last, said Andrew Natsios, the U.S. presidential envoy to Sudan.

The United States supports the United Nations' plans for bringing peace to Darfur, Natsios said during a speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington November 20. The United States stands behind the framework established by leaders in a meeting at the African Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 16, he said.

The framework, agreed to by leaders from the African Union, the Arab League, the United States, the United Kingdom, China, the European Union and other nations, affirmed the major elements of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1706. These elements include calling for the Darfur peacekeeping force to be expanded to 20,000 members. The force would be primarily African and commanded by an African general, but would be funded predominantly by the United Nations. The United Nations' command-and-control structure would be used.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol agreed in principle to the Addis Ababa document, Natsios said during a State Department press briefing November 20. There are still outstanding issues to which the Sudanese government must agree, including the number of troops involved. "We urge the Sudanese government to adopt the package that was a consensus document of the international community," Natsios said at the briefing.

The meeting in Addis Ababa was followed with a strong call for a cease-fire, said Jean-Marie Guéhenno, U.N. under secretary-general for

peacekeeping. Guéhenno, also speaking at the Brookings Institution November 20, said a cease-fire will not work unless a serious political process is established. "Just throwing a force at the problem will not solve the problem," he said. "If that force is deployed without a credible political process going on, it will not work."

"The political process has to be re-energized and the United Nations is now ready to take its responsibility alongside the African Union to help that political process," Guéhenno said.

Meetings that follow up on the issues discussed in Addis Ababa will be sponsored jointly by the United Nations and the African Union. The agreement also calls for the United Nations and the African Union jointly to appoint a special representative of the U.N. secretary-general. Both Natsios and Guéhenno said one of the past difficulties in reaching agreements on Darfur is that there had been multiple negotiations occurring among different groups. This plan should eliminate that difficulty, they said.

Guéhenno said the peacekeeping force must be deployed in cooperation with the Sudanese government. "Discussions will have to take place between the U.N., the African Union and the government of Sudan so that we are all clearly agreed on the timing and nature of the deployment that we are going to have to make expeditiously," he said.

Natsios said there has been suspicion within the Sudanese government that the United States has a hidden agenda for its involvement in Darfur, a claim which he called "nonsense." "The only agenda the United States has in Darfur is a human rights and humanitarian agenda," he said.

For a peace agreement in Darfur to be successful, Natsios said, groups will have to be disarmed. What makes this conflict in Darfur more destructive than previous wars in the region is the introduction of heavy weaponry, he said.

The mandate of the current African Union force ends on January 1, 2007. Additionally, in January 2007 there will be a new U.N. secretary-general and a new U.S. Congress. Both Guéhenno and Natsios agreed that because of these factors, there is an urgent need for the parties involved in the Darfur negotiations to reach final agreements. "No time can be lost," Guéhenno said.

For more information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

November 22, 2006

Activists Worry About Darfur Violence Spreading Through Region

Actress Mia Farrow calls for peacekeeping force in Chad, Central African Republic

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – The violence in Darfur, Sudan, is spreading to neighboring countries – Chad and the Central African Republic – according to award-winning actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Mia Farrow.

"The violence and devastation that is now defining Darfur has reached well across the border. In fact, the border is nonexistent," Farrow said at a press briefing in Washington November 21.

Farrow and David Rubenstein, the executive director of the Save Darfur Coalition, returned November 20 from Chad. There, they met with people in hospitals, displaced persons camps and those from looted and burned villages. They videotaped people's stories to show them in the United States.

Those who fled Darfur thought they would be safe in Chad, Rubenstein said. But in fact, incidents of torture, rape and burning of villages now also are occurring in Chad.

Farrow visited Darfur in 2004 and again in June 2006. The people she met in Chad had spent days on foot fleeing Darfur but found their attackers followed them into Eastern Chad, she said. "There is no safety for them now," Farrow added.

The only solution, Farrow said, is for a United Nations-backed peacekeeping force to be deployed to Darfur, Chad and the Central African

Republic. "The people deserve protection," she said.

The coalition hopes that a peacekeeping plan agreed to by international leaders in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 16 will work. However, it is concerned because the Sudanese government has yet to accept the plan in its entirety.

The plan calls for an expanded peacekeeping force of 20,000, jointly run by the United Nations and African Union. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=November&x=20061120174733hmnitsua0.5202143>).)

The peacekeeping force must be credible, effective and able to protect those who have fled Darfur, said former U.S. Ambassador Lawrence Rossin, who recently returned from a trip to Europe and Africa to meet with leaders about the situation. The force must be large and easily mobile in what is a huge territory, Rossin said. The peacekeeping force also must be fully funded, have a strong unified command and be focused on civilian protection, Rossin said.

Rossin also encouraged Americans to be vocal about their concerns about Darfur and its neighboring regions. Pressure from citizens shapes priorities of policymakers, Rossin said.

The coalition representatives could not obtain visas to visit Darfur – a problem many humanitarian workers and media are facing because of government restrictions.

The Save Darfur Coalition is an alliance of more than 175 faith-based, advocacy and humanitarian organizations working to help the people of Darfur.

U.S. ORGANIZATIONS DRAWING ATTENTION TO DARFUR

Many organizations across the United States are hosting events designed to encourage Americans to do what they can to help end the violence in Darfur. Many groups are holding fundraisers or hosting lectures to inform people about the crisis.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington is bringing attention to the crisis by projecting wall-sized images from Darfur on the outside of its building at night from November 20-26.

The images are being displayed to "alert the public to the urgency of stopping the human catastrophe in Darfur," said Fred Zeidman, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council chairman.

The exhibit calls attention in the United States and the world to the suffering of the civilian population in Darfur, said Andrew Natsios, U.S. presidential envoy to Sudan. Natsios spoke at the launch of the exhibit November 20.

The museum wants people to see the pictures so that they can articulate better what the situation in Darfur is like, Omer Ismail, a Darfurian refugee, said at the exhibit launch. What the pictures cannot show, Ismail said, are the lives of people destroyed.

The images

(<http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/analysis/detail/s/2006-11-20/photos/>) are available on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Web site.

Other prominent performers and activists have spoken to U.S. and U.N. leaders about the situation in Darfur. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060914184649AJatiA0.1508142>).

For more information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

International Security

November 22, 2006

Homeland Security Dept. Opposes Racial Profiling, Official Says

Despite imams incident, department urges continued vigilance

By Stephen Kaufman
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said it will review the conduct of its employees who were involved with the removal of six Muslim imams from a November 20 domestic flight bound from Minneapolis to Phoenix.

Homeland Security press secretary Russ Knocke also told USINFO November 22 that the department is "opposed to the concept of racial profiling," and its profiling techniques are based on suspect behavior rather than targeting ethnicities or faiths.

However, Knocke said that U.S. commercial airline pilots, bearing responsibility for the aircraft and safety of its passengers, are "within their authority at any time" to request law enforcement assistance, and "it's always better to err on the side of safety and security than it is being wrong."

According to press reports, a passenger aboard a US Airways flight told a flight attendant that the six men were engaged in suspicious behavior and security personnel subsequently removed those six men from the flight. The men were questioned by the FBI and Secret Service, and then were released, according to press reports.

The men, who flew to Phoenix on a later flight, said they only were praying, and the incident has been condemned by civil rights groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Security personnel are trained "to look for abnormal human behavior that might suggest that an individual is attempting to get past our front line personnel with nefarious intent. That is in no way racial profiling. That is behavioral profiling," Knocke said.

The November 20 incident resulted in "a very inconvenient situation" for the six imams, as well as the passengers traveling on that aircraft, but Knocke said passengers need to be vigilant about alerting authorities if they see anything they feel is abnormal.

"Ultimately, it seems that the information had led to a misjudgment, but we're not going to be critical of that judgment," he said.

He said that Homeland Security involvement in the incident was minimal and that the six imams successfully passed through the same security

checkpoint screening procedures other passengers are subjected to "without incident." Knocke added that any time a Homeland Security employee is accused of engaging in racial profiling or other inappropriate behavior, "our office of civil rights and civil liberties will look into that as a routine matter."

The incident occurred at the beginning of the Thanksgiving holiday period, when an estimated 25 million people are expected to board U.S. airline flights.

US Airways said in a November 21 statement that it does not "tolerate discrimination of any kind," and pledged a thorough internal investigation into the matter.

"We are always concerned when passengers are inconvenienced and especially concerned when a situation occurs that causes customers to feel their dignity was compromised," the US Airways statement said. The airline also pledged to "cooperate fully" with law enforcement officials to "determine the facts surrounding the incident."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

HIV- AIDS

November 22, 2006

World AIDS Pandemic Still Expanding, United Nations Reports

Survey highlights growing numbers of infections, along with increased treatment

By Charlene Porter
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The number of people living with HIV/AIDS climbed in 2006, the 25th year since first detection of the virus, according to an annual survey of the epidemic conducted by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), released in Geneva November 21.

The report -- 2006 AIDS Epidemic Update -- points out the "promising developments" made in the last few years to increase access to treatments and expand prevention programs. Still, an estimated 39.5 million people are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, with 4.3 million new infections in 2006 and almost 3 million deaths.

In 2005, the same annual survey reported about 38.6 million total cases worldwide, but precise comparisons from year to year are difficult to make because the estimates are made in wide ranges.

"In the past two years, the number of people living with HIV increased in every region in the world," according to the report's introduction. "The most striking increases have occurred in East Asia and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where the number of people living with HIV in 2006 was over one-fifth" (21 percent).

Despite those regional increases, sub-Saharan Africa is still the region most severely affected, home to 63 percent of the total number of those infected worldwide.

"Declines in national HIV prevalence are being observed in some sub-Saharan African countries, but such trends are currently neither strong nor widespread enough to diminish the epidemics' overall impact in this region," according to the report, considered the most authoritative global accounting of the epidemic made each year.

The update is released each year prior to the observance of World AIDS Day on December 1.

THE TRENDS IN INFECTION

The trends detected in the pandemic by the annual survey are just as significant as the numbers, and this year's report reveals how the spread of the disease may take widely different courses in different countries, cultures and subcultures.

"Knowing your epidemic," Dr. Peter Piot, UNAIDS executive director, said in a statement accompanying the report's release, "and understanding the drivers of the epidemic such as inequality between men and women and homophobia is absolutely fundamental to the long-term response to AIDS."

The epidemic update finds increasing evidence of HIV outbreaks among men who have sex with

men in Cambodia, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam and in Latin American nations. At the same time, the national AIDS prevention programs fail to reach these marginalized groups.

In some cases, nations have failed to sustain prevention programs because of a sense that the epidemic has been brought under control. However, new waves of young people continue to reach the age of sexual maturity and become vulnerable to HIV exposure. As a result, infection numbers have remained stable, rather than showing the reductions health officials hope for.

Uganda demonstrated significant success over the last 10 years in reducing the numbers of new infections occurring in its population, but now research indicates increasing infection rates in rural areas.

"This means that countries are not moving at the same speed as their epidemics," said Piot. "We need to greatly intensify life-saving prevention efforts while we expand HIV treatment programmes."

THE BENEFITS OF TREATMENT

Despite its cautionary themes, the epidemic update also points up the progress made in recent years to broaden the access to antiretroviral drug therapies. These drugs, available in some form for about a decade to developed-world patients, cannot cure AIDS, but they can contain and control the disease so that people living with AIDS can live functionally and productively.

The report assesses the cumulative impact of that development.

"Through the expanded provision of antiretroviral treatment (ARVs) an estimated 2 million life years were gained since 2002 in low- and middle-income countries," according to the 2006 AIDS Epidemic Update. "In sub-Saharan Africa alone, some 790,000 life years have been gained, the vast majority of them in the past two years of antiretroviral treatment scale-up. In Latin America, where wide-scale treatment provision began earlier, some 834,000 life years have been gained since 2002."

U.S. EFFORTS TO PROVIDE TREATMENT

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has been a key program to increase the numbers of people receiving ARVs. Launched in 2003, PEPFAR is a \$15 billion, five-year emergency plan, providing funds to fight the pandemic in 100 countries, with a special focus on the 15 hardest-hit countries. At latest count, the program, working with scores of partner organizations at the local level, has begun drug treatment for more than 560,000 people.

A State Department fact sheet provides a broader overview of the services being provided to communities beset with the epidemic:

- Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission for women in more than 4.5 million pregnancies;
- Anti-retroviral prophylaxis for women during 342,200 pregnancies and prevention of an estimated 65,100 infant HIV infections; and
- Counseling and testing services for more than 13.6 million men, women and children

The full text

(http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV_data/epi2006/default.asp) of the U.N. report is available on the organization's Web site. A fact sheet (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/67502.pdf>) on PEPFAR is available on the State Department Web site. Additional information (<http://www.pepfar.gov/75522.htm>) on PEPFAR is available on the program's Web page.

For more information on U.S. policy, see HIV/AIDS (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/hiv_aids.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

November 22, 2006

Elder Muslim Women in Mozambique Spread the Word about HIV/AIDS

Partnership for a Better Life

In Mozambique, Muslim women are engaged actively in partnerships in hope of turning the tide

of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. With support from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR/Emergency Plan), the Muslim Women's Association in the town of Quelimane receives training to improve members' knowledge of HIV/AIDS, including methods of prevention, counseling and testing.

Empowered by the information, the Muslim Women's Association identified prayer gatherings during the month of Ramadan as an opportunity to inform other Muslim women about services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. Following prayers at the local mosque, an ensemble of elder and young women presented a role-play performance in which the elders provided advice to young women prior to their entering marital life.

Dona Joana, one of the elder women, said, "It is our tradition and our duty to teach young women how to take care of their husbands and children. Now that we have learned there are diseases with no cure, it is our duty to teach others about this sort of things [sic]."

During the performance, Dona Joana provided information about HIV/AIDS using language familiar to the mosque's wider audience.

"We advise young girls to go to the health center nearby so they can have some analysis [HIV tests]. And in case they have AIDS, the nurse will give a medicine that will prevent their baby to get the bug that causes AIDS," she said. Using these simplified descriptions helped make abstract and complicated information on HIV/AIDS understandable.

The performance's audience actively participated in a play that addressed messages related to faithfulness, the importance of antenatal clinic visits and baby vaccination.

In coordination with host governments, the PEPFAR/Emergency Plan draws on the promise of partnerships with nongovernmental organizations, including faith-based and community-based organizations, to contribute to an effective, multisectoral response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In particular, the extensive geographic reach and well-developed infrastructure faith-based organizations have in the developed world are a critical element to this response.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

November 22, 2006

Care Center Shows AIDS Is Not "the End of the World"

Partnership for a Better Life

Philani Mono, a resident of South Africa, has experienced first-hand the benefits of President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. He recently shared his story with a staff member at the U.S. Embassy in Johannesburg.

"I am a patient at Aurum Care Centre, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, which is funded through President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). I was transferred from Soweto Hospice to the Aurum's care centre in June 2004. I was very ill and had given up on life. I lost my wife in 2003 and had to leave my 10-year-old daughter in my aunt's care. Death was real to me. I suffered from tuberculosis (TB), severe nerve disease (neuropathy) and anorexia. The neuropathy caused me to lose the feeling in my legs, so I have to use a wheelchair.

"Today, two years later, I am enjoying life again. With highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), I improved my health. Now I can assist my daughter financially with help from a disability grant. I have also done a computer course. I am studying basic counseling and testing skills so that I can help other HIV-infected South Africans.

"Although I still need a wheelchair, I am thankful for the opportunity to live and watch my daughter grow up. I look forward to sharing my experience by counseling other patients admitted to the Aurum Care Centre. The word, "Aurum", means "gold". Life is precious. The question is what we are going to do with the gift?

"My friend Alex was admitted to the Care Centre at the age of 26. The inner city streets were his home since childhood. His immune system was weak as HIV attacked his body. The CD4 count that measures cells in the immune system is normally between 800 and 1000. Alex's was far below that

amount. He was wasted, confused and delusional. He began taking TB treatment. For weeks after admission, Alex just slept. He only woke up when the bell rang for meals.

"All of us thought that Alex was too ill to recover, but he did not give up on life. After two months on TB treatment, he started antiretroviral therapy (ART). His condition improved radically. Today, Alex is reunited with his family and lives with them.

"Lucky, another friend, was a sales person before he became infected. He was so frail he practically limped into the Aurum Care Centre. His pain was so unbearable that he wished to die. The staff wanted him to live and prayed with him everyday.

"His faith became stronger with the loving support he got at the Centre. His pain lessened due to ART. Lucky slowly started walking again and can now walk from his home to the Aurum Care Centre. He is studying to become a pastor and will graduate soon. Lucky tells everybody that he had everything, but almost lost his life from one mistake. He appreciates the valuable gift of life.

"These stories describe the three of us so far. Sadly, we have lost friends to AIDS, but our philosophy is to never give up. Fight with all you have left in your body and soul.

"I extend my sincere thanks and devotion to all the staff at the Aurum Care Centre, our donors, especially PEPFAR, visitors and families. Without you, we never would have had the opportunity to enjoy life again. To God Almighty, I will remain humble for His Love and the second chance to live a better life. To those who are not sure about their status, I trust my letter will give you the courage to be tested. We will be there for you. All you need to do is to take that first step. Remember, AIDS is not the end of the world!"

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

Education

November 24, 2006

Middle East Partnership Initiative Announces Four New Awards

Algeria, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya to benefit from new university partnerships

Washington -- Four new grants totaling \$1,160,000 for partnerships between colleges and universities in the United States and the Middle East have been awarded by the Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI).

The projects selected involve institutions in Algeria, Qatar, Lebanon, and Libya, the State Department announced November 21.

Launched in 2002, MEPI is the Bush administration's program to promote political openness, economic liberty, educational opportunity and the empowerment of women in the Middle East.

University of Michigan's William Davidson Institute and Algeria's Institut National de Commerce will train women managers in Algeria "to meet the changing needs of the Algerian business community," according to the announcement.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette will seek to enhance the mass communications program at Qatar University by helping to institute a curriculum review, new course offerings, a student newspaper, the integration of new communication technology into the classroom and a student and faculty exchange and internship program.

Michigan State University and the Lebanese American University will create a model information and communications technology (ICT) education program in Lebanon "to strengthen the capacity for ICT training and to help Lebanese educators, particularly women, as they develop new strategies for teaching," the announcement said.

The University of Michigan and University of Garyounis will bring faculty from both universities together in Libya with the Arab Chamber of Commerce and the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Service to modernize the university's business and economics teaching.

The universities will contribute at least an additional \$457,162 to the partnerships, which will be implemented in cooperation with Higher Education for Development (HED) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the State Department said.

Established in 1992 as the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development, HED assists the nation's six major higher education associations in partnering with USAID, as well as other development agencies, donor organizations and foundations.

USAID, the principal provider of U.S. foreign assistance, is an independent federal government agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the secretary of the State Department.

With the four new partnerships, MEPI's U.S.-Middle East University Partnership Program comprises 21 relationships between U.S. and Middle Eastern educational institutions aimed at promoting the development of democratic and prosperous societies.

"The partnerships leverage faculty expertise and best practices to strengthen the capacity of the Middle East institutions and improve access to education for young people so they can be informed citizens of free societies and effective participants in modern economies," the State Department said.

MEPI grants typically are for up to two years. Previous partnerships involved universities in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia and Morocco. The grants focused on such areas as information and communication technology, American studies, business and economics, media and journalism and education.

Since its launch four years ago, the Middle East Partnership Initiative has funded more than 350 projects aimed at training election observers, voters, democracy activists, journalists, women's rights activists, civic education teachers, and others who may play a vital role in regional reform.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/76455.htm>) of the State Department announcement is available on the State Department Web site.

For more information, see Middle East Partnership Initiative (<http://www.mepi.state.gov/>).

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

Official Texts and Transcripts

November 22, 2006

Transcript: State Department Spokesman's Daily Briefing – Situation in Sudan and Somalia

Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey briefs reporters November 22

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State
Daily Briefing Index
Wednesday, November 22, 2006
12:20 p.m. EST

Briefer: Tom Casey, Deputy Spokesman

SUDAN

-- Efforts Being Made to get Appropriate Force Into Darfur/Current Administration Working Daily on the Issue

SOMALIA

-- IGAD Proposal/UN Security Council Considering Proposal

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2006
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

12:20 p.m. EST

QUESTION: *On a different subject, on Darfur. Understanding that we've had briefings earlier this week, but there remain some criticism from some people in the clergy that the U.S., notwithstanding the aid it's given, has not done enough to get the UN force that it publicly says it wants in to Darfur or to convince other countries to do that. Do you*

have any further response or can you give us your response to that?

MR. CASEY: Well, Charlie, I do think, and you heard from Special Envoy Natsios earlier in the week about the efforts that he's been making along with Secretary General Annan and members of the AU and other individuals to try and make sure that we get an appropriate force into Darfur and do so as quickly as possible. Certainly, as we've said, we wish that this could have happened sooner and I don't think anyone doubts that we would like to have seen this happen earlier. But we do believe that with the agreement reached in Addis over last week that we have the basis for being able to move forward with the deployment. Again, as you heard Andrew say, we're looking for a positive response to this and assertion of full agreement with this from the Sudanese Government. We're looking for that in the short term, by the end of this month, as he told you.

I know that people feel very strongly about this issue and certainly we do as well. And I think as you know, this Administration and this President have been primarily responsible for putting this issue on the international agenda and for being able to get the progress that we have. It has not gone as far or as fast as we would like. Certainly we want to see it move as quickly as possible. But that said, this government and this Administration is working actively on a daily basis on this. Special Envoy Natsios is. The Secretary has been engaged in this. Many other officials in this building have. And we're going to keep on working it until we get that force in.

(...)

QUESTION: *One more on Somalia. Some EU experts are saying that the U.S. is strongly pushing for a regional force to go to Somalia and that this is something you've already decided and whether this is the IGAD force that people have been talking about. I wonder whether you could illuminate us on what U.S. policy is on a regional force going into Somalia. There are fears that this would somehow stoke up regional war.*

MR. CASEY: Yeah, I did see that story. Let me try and explain to you where I think things actually are and see if that helps. First of all, IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, put forth a proposal aimed at restoring stability in Somalia and part of that included deploying a training and protection mission for the Somalia

transitional federal institutions. Now the -- you've got heads of state approved that proposal at a meeting they had in September. I believe it was September 5th of this year. That proposal was then passed on to the AU, and the African Union Peace and Security Council endorsed that proposal on September 13th.

Subsequent to that, the African Union has passed that proposal on to the United Nations Security Council and the Security Council's received that proposal, and members are looking at it and considering what the best way forward might be on it.

Now, the United States is supportive of the idea of a deployment of such a force if it would, in fact, stabilize the situation inside Somalia, and certainly people are having, again, discussions and consultations about this at the UN. This, though, has been standing policy with us for some time, and I think you've heard Jendayi Frazer speak to this issue previously, in fact, I think after the last meeting of the Somalia Contact Group.

So this is an ongoing proposal. It's one that's originated with IGAD and with the AU, and it's now in the Security Council for consideration. I think the main thing, though, is that our basic goal and our basic policy remains the same. We want to see dialogue between the various actors in Somalia. We want to see a stabilization of the country. We want to see an end to violence. And we ultimately want to see a Somalia with a functioning government and civil order that serves the interest of the people.

QUESTION: *But would you support having Ethiopia and Eritrean troops on this force and being in Somalia because Ethiopian and Eritrean - you have in recent weeks been critical of Ethiopian and Eritrean interference in Somalia, so how would you see this sort of regional or IGAD or whatever force it is that newly emerges?*

MR. CASEY: Well, as I said, this is a proposal that's been put forward. It's in the Security Council for consideration and we will and will be consulting with our colleagues there as well as officials at the AU about this. But I'm not aware that there are any specific details that have been brought forward or any immediate plans to make such a deployment. So this is something that's under discussion. And without being party to those, I think I'll just leave it to the folks up there to continue those consultative processes on, you

know, what the details of this proposal would ultimately look like.

QUESTION: *But is the U.S. coming up with a resolution on this? Are you supporting a writing of a resolution or --*

MR. CASEY: No. Again, the status -- no, the status of this is the proposal's been forwarded to the Security Council and there are consultations there. I am not trying to preview any specific actions for you at this point.

QUESTION: *You said you have no details but you -- but the U.S. supports it?*

MR. CASEY: Well, we support the concept of deploying such a force if in fact it's going to be able to help stabilize the situation and support our common objective, but the details of that proposal still have to be worked out.

QUESTION: *That would be in support of the Transitional Government?*

MR. CASEY: Yes, this was initially something that came out of discussions between IGAD and the Transitional Federal Institutions, as I understand it.

QUESTION: *So would this force only be limited to the Baidoa area or would it be moved up to --*

MR. CASEY: Again, I don't have any -- there is no specific detailed plan that I'm aware of that has been put forward on this. This is something that's under discussions and in consultation at the UN, and we'll see what comes out of this.

QUESTION: *It's just one of -- sorry, it's just one of many ideas being discussed or is it the key idea being discussed?*

MR. CASEY: This specific idea is being discussed in the Security Council. Obviously there are other discussions going on in the Somalia Contact Group and at the UN about what we can do to help bring about the end state that we want for Somalia. I think we view this as something that is a piece of the puzzle or a piece of the picture, but it's not a silver bullet solution of and by itself.

(...)

(end transcript)

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